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Community As Classroom: A Teacher's Practical Guide To Oral History

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Community As Classroom: A Teacher's Practical Guide To Oral History

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Table of Contents

Foreword iii

I **Introduction** 1

II **Why Oral History in the Classroom?** 2

III **Planning an Oral History Project** 5

IV **Recording Equipment and Tapes** 6

A. Selecting a Tape Recorder 6

B. Cassette Tapes 6

C. Storage and Preservation 6

D. Maintenance 6

V **The Interview** 7

A. Arranging the First Meeting 7

B. Classroom Preparation and Research 7

C. Interviewing 7

D. Legal Considerations 9

E. Interview Transcripts 9

F. Maintaining Control 9

VI **Family History** 11

VII **Pioneer Reminiscences** 14

VIII **Local History** 18

IX **Using the Interview** 21

X **Appendix** 22

XI **Bibliography** 28

Foreword

> We are now at the beginning of a movement to preserve the early history of this province. We have conducted an experiment in Saskatoon by which a small group of only five, of which some were old timers and some professors of the university, meet regularly with a typist present. Some old timer is the guest of the evening. We all sit around and smoke and ask questions about the early days and after a while the old timer's tongue is loosened and he tells us of things that happened while the typist takes it down in shorthand. Finally copies are given to each member of the group. It is felt that some such machinery for gathering the stories of our pioneers should be set up in the different districts of the province and this year we are trying to do it.

The above is an excerpt of a 1922 address to the organizational meeting of the Regina Historical Association by the distinguished Western Canadian Historian and later Provincial Archivist Arthur S. Morton. His remarks demonstrate an innate historical curiosity and an enthusiasm about the province's past which continue to flourish to this day. He recognized, long before others, that much of Saskatchewan's history is not written. It remains in the memories of its people. In order to capture its full richness the historian must not only utilize the written records but also consult the living documents: the participants and witnesses themselves. Dr. Morton, in effect, was an early proponent of the method of historical enquiry now identified as oral history. If only he had a Sony!

With the advent of the magnetic tape recorder, oral history has evolved into a proven source of historical information. The Saskatchewan Archives has been actively collecting oral history records for over thirty years. They expand the range and depth of the documentation we can preserve on contemporary society; they offer exciting possibilities for involving a broader public in documenting community history; and they suggest new ways of making such documentation available beyond the archives.

Oral history also can be an exciting tool in the classroom. One of its great virtues in teaching is that it can link the community and its people directly to the history that is being taught in the regular curriculum showing national trends or events in their local contexts. It can bring a new dimension to social studies complementing and extending existing textbooks. *Community as Classroom* is being published because of a need expressed to us by teachers for some practical assistance in using oral history in their teaching. Although there already exists a wealth of "how-to" literature on the method, this handbook was designed specifically with the Saskatchewan experience in mind.

Community as Classroom emerges out of the years of practice the Saskatchewan Archives Board has had with oral history and other recorded sound documents. It is primarily the work of Krzysztof Gebhard who joined our staff in 1980 and heads the Sound and Moving Image Section. Mr. Gebhard has written numerous articles on oral history and has led workshops throughout the province. We also owe special thanks to others who have assisted in the preparation of this guide in various ways. They include Al Schell, Director of Curriculum Development, Saskatchewan Education; John Schaller, Faculty of Education, University of Regina; and Lesley Wyle Educational Resource Consultant, Toronto. Archives staff who also assisted include Kathlyn Szalasznyj and Douglas H. Bocking.

Ian E. Wilson
Provincial Archivist

I. Introduction

Many changes have taken place in teaching social studies over the past few years. The new textbooks recognize the contributions by various cultures that make up the Canadian mosaic and there is a growing interest in the study of immigration patterns, the roles of women and of the family, and in various other detailed aspects of everyday life. These factors, together with greater use of audio-visual and other innovative aids, are helping social studies to become a subject directly relevant to the lives of young Canadians.

As part of existing social studies programmes, the teaching technique known as oral history allows students to play a more active part in the learning process. The community is, in effect, transformed into a classroom as students collect information based upon the personal experiences of people who participated in or witnessed particular events.

Oral history is widely employed by scholars, journalists, archivists, local historians, genealogists and writers of biographies. The Saskatchewan Archives Board has been collecting and preserving oral documentation for nearly three decades. Today its collection is one of the largest in Canada. The Archives also encourages and promotes the use of the oral history method by holding conferences, conducting workshops and providing consultation.

In the spring and fall of 1980 the Saskatchewan Archives initiated "The Children and Grandparents Oral History Programme."[1] Its objectives were:

1. To provide students with an interesting and innovative way to celebrate Saskatchewan's Jubilee.
2. To increase students' knowledge and appreciation of Saskatchewan history.
3. To enhance students' understanding of the contributions made by their grandparents and other senior citizens to Saskatchewan's development.
4. To introduce students and teachers to oral history as a teaching tool.
5. To add to the Saskatchewan Archives Board's collection of historical documentation.

To implement the programme the Archives Board invited the province's grade seven students to approach older members of their communities, with a view to recording their reminiscences about the "old days." Over 5,000 students registered and they, in turn, collected a wealth of material good enough to be deposited in the Saskatchewan Archives. (Excerpts from some of the interviews are reproduced elsewhere in this booklet.)

Although a number of excellent oral history manuals are available, most teachers neither have the time nor the resources to study the methodology in depth. This booklet, therefore, was compiled in response to requests from those

Alex Howard turning the butterchurn, St. Luke district, ca. 1910. Saskatchewan Archives Board R-A6189.

teachers who had participated in the Saskatchewan Archives Board's Children and Grandparents Oral History Programme. They had expressed an interest in receiving a type of handbook that would sum up current thinking on the subject of oral history, as well as providing them with practical and convenient guidelines on how to implement oral history programmes in their classrooms.

Community As Classroom: A Teacher's Practical Guide to Oral History takes a step-by-step approach to organizing oral history projects. It includes suggestions on how to compile and record family histories, pioneer experiences and local histories. While the recommendations can be applied to various curriculum levels, there is ample opportunity for individual teachers to adapt the material to their own particular needs.

Notes

[1] A full description of the project can be found in Loraine Thompson, "The Children and Grandparents Oral History Programme: A Report," in *The Saskatchewan Oral History Conference, 1981. Proceedings*, edited by Krzysztof M. Gebhard (Regina: 1981), pp. 61-72.

Boys working in the school garden in Edam S.D. No. 2256, 1914. Saskatchewan Archives Board R-B285(7).

II. Why Oral History in the Classroom?

Oral history teaching is not meant to replace the traditional ways of looking at the past. However, used in conjunction with existing textbooks, it may help students to expand their knowledge of specific historical aspects. For instance, there is no one singular history of Saskatchewan but a series of histories exist pertaining to the province's settlement, its political institutions, the development of its agriculture and of its art. Inquiry into any one of these areas, enables the students to better understand the historical process. "It is like life," says James Hoopes, "a test of our ability to imaginatively place ourselves in the position of other people, so that we can understand the reasons for their actions."[1]

Students soon will discover that the substance of history is all around us and that in any community the possibilities and resources for an oral history project are inexhaustible. Anyone who ever has listened to stories told by an elderly aunt, spent time in a rural community chatting with a hairdresser, a barber or storekeeper, knows that much of our local and regional history has been committed to memory rather than having been put down in writing. Almost everyone has a story to tell and, in most cases, is willing to share it with others. Older people, especially, like to reminisce and talk about the past. At that stage of their lives reflection through memories can be a therapeutic exercise for them that often brings about positive self perception. Robert Butler in *Why Survive? Being Old in America* explains the importance of receiving comprehensive biographical material from an older person. This "life review," he points out, can be obtained by relatively untrained persons who function as therapists, merely by listening to those who can offer their own interpretation of the meaning of life.[2] The experience, therefore, benefits both the listener and the speaker.

When an older person is asked to describe to young schoolchildren what "things were like in bygone days" it creates a sense of community between generations. Within the framework of the Saskatchewan Archives Board's Children and Grandchildren Oral History Programme, social gatherings were organized by participating schools; refreshments were served to the grade seven oral historians and their informants while the interviews were played and the presence of parents and other local residents encouraged everyone to tell more stories.

Teachers expressed surprise at the enthusiastic response to the project; they variously described it on evaluation forms as a "good public relations exercise" or with comments such as, "We had so many people wishing to come to the school to be interviewed that we will have to continue next year!" Others remarked on the students' own satisfaction with their recorded interviews; many, they said, expressed a desire to gather

additional information about certain events, persevering whenever they were confronted with conflicting data that required further research. By, in effect, "doing history" the project proved that students can be creative and industrious, provided they are allowed to be involved in something that is their very own. This does not mean their efforts can replace a professionally prepared history lesson, however, as one teacher noted, "the pupil can, at least, do what the historian does and thereby come to understand a little better the nature of the activity we call history."[3]

Another attractive aspect of an oral history project is the application of technology. Today's students generally feel comfortable with cassette tape recorders and when presented with an opportunity to work with such mechanical devices, they usually appreciate the refreshing alternative they provide to more mundane everyday assignments.

The oral history experience can be a useful instruction tool but its value in the classroom extends far beyond operating a tape recorder and collecting basic data. Interviewing, itself, is an art that encourages students to develop a wider range of academic and social skills. According to Allan Anderson, veteran Canadian broadcaster turned oral historian, it means "you have to draw people out, you have to stir up their memories, you have to provoke them and charm them, you have to bully them or be patient and kind to them, or humour them along, depending on circumstances."[4] Allan Nevins who initiated the oral history programme at Columbia University also pondered on the qualities necessary to be the best kind of interviewer: "He must have a combination of traits of personality and intellect that is hard to obtain. He must have, what the Germans call *gemüt*, obvious sympathy with the person whom he interviews, friendliness and tact, as well as courage. He must work hard to prepare himself for every interview and must have a great breadth of interests."[5]

Realistically, no one can expect every student to develop and possess all these traits. It may be fair to state however, that the skills and qualities mentioned by both Anderson and Nevins are those which educators are trying to develop in their classrooms. The independence students are allowed to assert in oral history projects also will teach them how to locate information, compare source material and ultimately make intelligent decisions in other areas of learning.

With practice and experience, even very young children can become fairly competent oral historians and interviewers. When evaluating all student performances the teacher need not judge only the eloquence with which he/she asked the questions or the audio quality of the recording. "The crucial test is," wrote Cullom Davis and James Krohe, "whether that student was able to see history through those interviews with a little more clarity and with a little more breadth . . . ."[6]

Rural school children, ca. 1919. Saskatchewan Archives Board R-A428(7).

Notes

[1] James Hoopes, *Oral History: An Introduction for Students* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), p. 3.

[2] Robert N. Butler, *Why Survive? Being Old in America* (New York: Harper and Row), 1975, pp. 412-413.

[3] Lawrence Taylor, "Oral History in Schools," *Oral History*, Vol. 5, p. 21.

[4] Allan Anderson, *Remember the Farm: Memories of Farming, Ranching and Rural Life in Canada, Past and Present* (Toronto: Macmillan), 1977, p. xiv.

[5] Allan Nevins, "The Uses of Oral History," *Oral History at Arrowhead*, Elizabeth I. Dixon and James V. Mink, eds., p. 28.

[6] Cullom Davis and James Krohe, "History with a Tape Recorder: In the Community and in the Classroom," *Illinois Journal of Education*, No. 63, May/June 1972, p. 11.

John Love's General Store, Grenfell, 1880's. Saskatchewan Archives Board R-A2005(1).

III. Planning an Oral History Project

The best beginning is a modest one. The oral history project you wish to devise should be manageable in scope, well defined and simple enough *not* to require an unreasonable amount of preparation on the part of the students. You might wish to cooperate with others in your community who, by the nature of their work, are involved in history — the local historical society, museum personnel, archivists, librarians and newspaper people.

As mentioned earlier, oral history can act as an excellent supplement to textbooks and other resource materials. It is, therefore, up to you, the teacher, to decide first on a focus for your project and then explore its possible compatibility with the school's existing history or social studies curriculum.

If you are involved with elementary school children you probably will have to play a greater role in determining the structure of the project. High school students, on the other hand, will respond with enthusiasm if allowed to express their own ideas and interests, while being given more freedom to design, direct and coordinate the entire programme.

The nature of the interviews may be *biographical*, revolving around the informant's life story or his/her general reminiscences. Particular historical events can be documented *episodically* by interviewing a number of actual participants or observers. Projects of this nature can relate to interviews with Second World War veterans and with others who participated in national or global events. Since most communities have had their share of controversial political and social issues, disasters, celebrations and so on, the interviews also can focus on a specific local incident. Projects that examine particular practices, trades and social processes are *topical* in nature. A high school in Rabun Gap, Georgia, for instance, has been very successful in collecting oral testimony from large numbers of local people on how they created folk pottery, prepared turtle soup, caught fish or built a log cabin. The senior citizens in the community were only too glad to pass on their knowledge to a younger generation.

After establishing your goals and the nature of your oral history project prepare a list of topics that interviewers can follow. The list is an integral part of the process and considerable classroom time should be set aside to prepare it. Students will learn a great deal from the exercise by being encouraged to suggest topics. (The teacher can write them on the blackboard and then discuss them during the activity.) Following such a session he/she can prepare a more streamlined and, if necessary, supplemental list of topics. However, the final product should merely be used as a guide and *not* as a questionnaire. In that way, the interviewing student will be able to pursue certain subjects, as he/she sees fit, without being tied to an inflexible set of questions.

Practice interviews are useful in the classroom and teachers may participate by making themselves the subjects of the students' first attempts. This can be done in the form of a press conference or by allowing students to question one another, regularly reversing the role of interviewer and informant. These and similar exercises will help the student gain confidence and make them aware of the skills they are acquiring for the actual interview.

IV. Recording Equipment and Tapes

One of the least worrisome aspects of oral history in a classroom is the cost. Today's cassette tape recorders are inexpensive, durable and easy to operate. Most schools have a number of them available, and many students have one at home.

Reel-to-reel tape recorders do have superior recording capabilities, but their size, cost and operational features make them impractical for use by students. For these reasons we will concern ourselves here only with the popular, single speed cassette machines.

A. Selecting a Tape Recorder

If your school's inventory of audio-visual equipment does not already include a number of portable cassette tape recorders, you might have to purchase several for shared classroom and field work. These can be a long-time investment as they can be used in oral history and other projects for several years. Because you will not expect your students to produce broadcast quality interviews, simplicity and ease of operation should be the main consideration. If certain steps are taken to eliminate background noise and microphone movement, very satisfactory results can be obtained even with a lower priced recorder.

Here is a list of considerations when selecting cassette tape recorders for your project:

1. The best source is an established local dealer with a good record in sales and repair. Brand-name recorders such as Sony, Realistic and Panasonic are worth considering before some of the lesser known brands. Expect to spend about $100 for one machine.

2. Test the recorder's ability to record voices. This requires a lower level of frequency response from the recording mechanism than is usually necessary for recording music.

3. Select recorders which automatically adjust for optimum recording levels.

4. For flexibility, the recorder should be the kind with the ability to operate with AC current and DC batteries. The machine should, however, be powered by household current whenever possible. Not only are batteries expensive, but tape recorders drain them rather quickly and this can result in an uneven recording speed. If batteries are used, it is a good idea to change them after one hour of continuous use and give them a rest. Removing them when the recorder is not in use or on an AC power line for an extended period will prevent harmful battery leakage.

5. Most recorders will have a built-in condenser microphone, a feature that is extremely convenient. Unfortunately, the quality of the recording when using the built-in microphone is considerably lower when compared to that of an external one. The built-in microphone also has a tendency to pick up a greater volume of extraneous sounds and motor noise. If you are striving toward high fidelity recording, then it is not advisable to use the built-in microphone. On the other hand, it would probably be more convenient and easier, epecially for younger students, to use this feature.

B. Cassette Tapes

As in selecting a suitable tape recorder, you will not need to purchase expensive high frequency tapes. Medium priced, low noise, brand-name cassettes are most reliable. One C60 tape (30 minutes per side) will be in the $2-$3 price range. Avoid the temptation of bargain tapes. Problems will usually emerge such as jamming, tearing and poor recording as such tapes often lack adequate iron oxide coating. Before deciding on the tape, make certain that it is contained in a case which can be taken apart by removing five small screws. If something does go wrong, then you can get at the tape and remedy the problem. The moulded type cassettes (and these are the ones that usually present the most problems) have to be forced open and the tape subsequently placed in a new one. The most practical and durable is the C60 tape. C120 is not a good buy as it has a tendency to tangle easily due to its thin composition.

C. Storage and Preservation

Magnetic tape has been subjected to much confusion and myth. We all have heard stories about accidental erasure or of fading to the point of incoherence. Experience, the introduction of better bonding agents and the widespread use of polyester (mylar) backing have proven that magnetic tape is one of the most durable mediums for storing information.

Accidental erasures almost never happen. Only in the event of a tape being placed immediately adjacent to a strong magnetic field would erasure occur. If tapes are stored at least three inches away from generators, electrical conduits or other sources of magnetic energy, there is no danger.

Tapes can be stored under normal room conditions with a temperature of about 20°C with a relative humidity of 40 percent. For long term preservation the key is environmental stability with little fluctuation in temperature and humidity.

D. Maintenance

Most cassette tape recorders have two heads: the erase head, located on the left, and the record/playback head on the right. The heads are the most essential components of a tape recorder and their condition will determine the quality of a recording. After extended use, the head and the pinch wheel tend to accumulate dirt. Therefore, clean the heads occasionally, perhaps after every twenty hours of play. Use a cotton swab lightly dipped in isopropyl alcohol and take care not to apply any pressure on the heads. You might also consider investing ten or twelve dollars in a head demagnetizer. This accessory should be used periodically to purge the heads of any residual magnetic fields which remain after the heads have been exposed to electrical charges over a period of time.

V. The Interview

Once you and your students have established your goals and objectives, prepare the actual interviews. Unless the project is confined to family history it is up to you, the teacher, to canvass your community for the best possible informants. This can be done by contacting community organizations, heritage and historical groups and knowledgeable individuals. A notice in the local newspaper or letters sent to possible informants may bring good results. It is, however, important that the people you select will be of interest to the student groups involved.

In letters to informants outline your project's objectives, explain the methods you intend to use for the interviews, stating that they will be taped and listened to by other people. If you are planning to deposit the tapes for public use in a library or an archives, mention the fact to the potential informant. (See Appendix, *Figure 1* for sample letter.)

A. Arranging the First Meeting

Prior to the actual interview arrange for the student to meet and get acquainted with his/her prospective informant. At that time the questions he/she will ask can be discussed and relevant biographical data obtained. Using forms such as those illustrated in *Figures 2* and *3* of the Appendix will simplify the task; however, it is not recommended that the student leave a copy of a questionnaire with the prospective informant. Such a move may, in some instances, create anxiety on the part of the interviewee and possibly destroy the spontaneity of the interview. Submitting a brief abstract will be more effective than the presentation of a lengthy list of questions.

This preliminary session, if successful, ultimately will lead to a friendly and relaxed atmosphere during the actual interview. The student, however, must exercise caution that the initial meeting does not develop into an untimely interview. The informant should not be asked to recount detailed stories until the formal interview takes place.

B. Classroom Preparation and Research

Regardless of the student's age, he/she must make a sincere effort to know as much as possible about the prospective informant. During preliminary discussions he/she can learn about outstanding events in the subject's life or his/her community; next he/she should read available material about the period during which the informant flourished.

If the project concerns one particular event, other documentary sources should be consulted, such as books, journals, newspapers and audio-visual productions. A visit to an archival institution will usually yield valuable data but keep in mind that the level of research must depend upon the interviewer's degree of sophistication. A grade seven student, for example, can hardly be expected to spend long hours poring over complex archival material.

If the project is family-oriented much preliminary information can be obtained from parents and other relatives, as well as from sources such as photographs, scrapbooks, family bibles, correspondence and heirlooms.

Significant disparity exists between the availability of information on political, social, economic or religious leaders and the data that can be gathered about ordinary citizens. While, after a certain amount of research, traditional sources usually yield some information on famous people, little has been written down about the lives of those who did not rise to great prominence. In the absence of such records, students must, nevertheless, be thoroughly familiar with the subject's community, his/her neighbourhood and the social milieu in which he/she functions. The following story by Edward Ives, veteran American collector of oral testimony, stresses the need for such advance preparation:

> I remember one young girl interviewing an old woodsman. She asked (him) what they cut down the trees with. "Well girlie," he said with a kind of amused contempt, "we used an ax, that's what we used." Girlie looked him right in the eye: "Poll or double-bit?" she said. You could feel his attitude change. "Well, mostly poll axes, but later on . . . ."[1]

C. Interviewing

Once a prospective informant has consented to the interview he/she must be given adequate notice of the date on which it is to take place. An entire afternoon or evening should be set aside for the event, at a time and place agreeable to both parties. (Poor results are inevitable if the informant is hurrying to prepare dinner or the interviewer is rushing off to a hockey game.)

It is essential that the atmosphere for the interview be calm and relaxed, just as the locale where it is to take place must be comfortable and congenial. Areas that are unfamiliar to the informant may make him/her feel nervous; large empty rooms and outdoor locations, enticing as they may seem should be avoided because, most likely, they both will result in poor quality recordings. Therefore, a living room or study in surroundings familiar to the informant are ideal places where the interview can take place. Care also should be taken to eliminate unnecessary noises and unwanted distractions. Furniture that squeaks, an air conditioner that emits loud hums, a ticking grandfather or cuckoo clock, a barking dog, or a ringing telephone and third-party interruptions all can seriously hamper even the best-planned session.

The interviewer should sit facing the informant, both parties equidistant from a well-placed and cushioned microphone. The closer the speakers are to the microphone the fewer stray sounds will be picked up. Before proceeding the interviewer should test the equipment to make sure it is in good working order. Carrying extra tapes and having an extension cord handy are measures well worth taking.

Fort Qu'Appelle telegraph office, 1897. Saskatchewan Archives Board R-A6514.

For easy identification, the interview should be formally introduced as follows: "Today is ..... (date). My name is: ..... (name of interviewer) and I will be interviewing ..... (name of informant) about his/her experiences in ..... The interview is being conducted in the home of ..... (name of informant) in ..... (name of town), Saskatchewan."

As pointed our earlier, the interview process requires more than simply asking a series of prepared questions; it demands concentration and the ability to listen. Experienced interviewers are attentive and make intelligent notes while the informant speaks. They monitor the tape recorder from time to time to make sure it continues to function efficiently. It is embarrassing to discover that portions of the interview are not on tape, due to jamming or other mechanical failures.

Above all, interviewers must remember, at all times, that the narrator is the star performer. Therefore, they never must attempt to change his/her opinion or provoke an argument. Even in the event that the informant's story is riddled with obvious inaccuracies, they should not be pointed out to the informant during or after the interview, but the fact should be subsequently noted on an accompanying document. (See Appendix, *Oral History Visitation Report, Figure 3*).

The best way to begin an interview is by asking a few personal questions — date and place of birth, name of parents, childhood experiences, education and if applicable, reasons for choosing a particular trade or profession. Such questions relax the informant and give him/her a feeling of being in control. The interviewee also must have the option *not* to reply to questions he/she considers too sensitive.

Here are other pertinent hints and suggestions:

1. The interview should be a relaxed and informative dialogue. It is a serious venture, and, therefore, care should be taken not to let it deteriorate into a meaningless chit-chat.

2. The questions should be clear and brief, presented one at a time. Lengthy multiple questions rarely are fully answered and only confuse the informant.

3. Interrupting the informant with a stream of "uh-huhs" and "oh yeahs" can be distracting and annoying. Such acknowledgements usually can be accomplished by silent nods, gestures or smiles.

4. If possible, avoid closed questions that only require a "yes" or "no" answer. A good interviewer probes and asks provocative questions, preceded by who? what? where? and when? For instance, instead of asking, "Was life difficult on the farm before electrification?" say, "What was life like on the farm before electrification?"

5. While the informant should be encouraged to stick to one particular topic, the interviewer must be astute enough to allow him/her to digress if another story on a different topic happens to evolve. For example, an account relating to the purchase of groceries may develop into a colourful description of the informant's father's general store and its clientele. Such a story should be regarded as a bonus, even if it was somewhat off the track.

6. The interview will be greatly enhanced if explanations of customs, practices and depictions of objects are provided. The informant should be encouraged to provide full descriptions, being reminded if necessary, that they will be of special interest to schoolchildren who often are unfamiliar with particular terms, names of individuals, tools, measurements, etc.

7. Talking about specific events or experiences usually gets the ball rolling and questions such as, "Were you in Regina during the Cyclone of 1912?" or "What were your feelings when you landed in Halifax?" can lead to most informative stories.

8. Written material and objects such as newspaper clippings, scrapbooks, photograph albums, heirlooms and collectibles are useful aids. They can be identified and described on the tape with, "Here is a picture of you working on a combine. How would you compare it to today's farm machinery?" or, "This is a certificate of achievement from the Romanian Benevolent Society. Could you tell me something about that organization?"

9. Tact and patience are important ingredients for a successful interview. To recall a forgotten incident may take a few minutes, especially if it happened fifty or sixty years ago. When a brief silence occurs, it is best not to interrupt the informant's train of thought; give him/her a chance to remember a particular point he/she wishes to make. Interjecting another question or cutting him/her short with an offhand, "Oh, that's not important," should be avoided.

10. There is no right or wrong length for an interview and its quality should be assessed by criteria *other* than time. Lengthy interviews rarely present a problem for schoolchildren, however, some informants, especially those who are older, get exhausted after one hour or so, while others may be able to carry on comfortably for much longer periods of time.

D. Legal Considerations

Copyright laws are not clear as to the ownership rights of recorded interview material, although both the interviewer and the informant may be able to claim such rights or even consider themselves as joint creators. The ethics of oral history suggest that proposed usage of the recorded document be explained to the informant and then he/she be asked to sign an appropriate release form after the interview. Most institutions involved in the collection of oral testimony grant informants the option to restrict the use of certain tapes. However, in the case of school projects it rarely is necessary or expedient as interviews conducted by students are not likely to be harmful to the informant. Yet, you, the teacher, must devise a release form to be completed by the informant that will be suitable for your particular project. (Sample forms, with or without restrictive clauses are shown as *Figures 4* and *5* in the Appendix.)

E. Interview Transcripts

Transcribing interviews is time consuming and, unless it is done for a specific purpose, usually unnecessary. Although an oral history transcript has some advantages, especially to locate certain information conveniently, its overall benefits are limited. The interview on tape remains the authentic record with numerous conversational characteristics that obviously are absent from a transcript. Of course, if your school publishes a newspaper or magazine you might wish to reprint a selection of oral history interviews in one of its sections. In that case, the typing class could become involved by providing the transcriptions.

F. Maintaining Control

Unless verbatim interview transcripts are part of your project it is imperative that written summaries be made available after the interview. Depending on your goals, they may be detailed minute-by-minute accounts or simply outlines of the main themes discussed. Also, keep in mind that if you wish to preserve the tapes for any length of time, they will be of little use unless they have been carefully documented. (An interview summary is shown in *Figure 6* of the Appendix.)

Notes

[1] Edward D. Ives, *The Tape-Recorded Interview* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press), 1980, p. 45.

Group of Doukhobors in Yorkton, early 1900's. Saskatchewan Archives Board R-A4356.

VI. Family History

An oral history project which can be organized with little difficulty is one which relates to family history. In most instances, good rapport already exists between the student and prospective informants — his/her parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and other relatives. Basic research is simplified as source materials such as old family diaries, letters, photo albums, scrapbooks, souvenirs and memorabilia are easily accessible. Besides, an interview with a favourite aunt or uncle, will give the student confidence to tackle more complex projects in the future.

We have discussed the importance of the tangible relationship that exists between textbook data and everyday life. By interviewing relatives who participated in or witnessed certain past events of local, national and international significance, students become aware of a new dimension of history and learn to appreciate it within an even larger context. Although a particular incident remembered by a grandparent may not seem as important to others it could assist the student grandson/granddaughter to reconstruct the atmosphere of the past.

Family members can be interviewed on a variety of subjects. Their accounts may be strictly limited to family events but could extend to such diverse topics as occupations, education, leisure activities and views on religion and politics. Here, for example, are an elderly Regina resident's reminiscences of "ice harvesting" in the 1920's:

> Well, it was a good chance to make a little extra money . . . I was harvesting on the Condie Dam and the first company I worked for was the Capitol Ice Company. Jimmy Grassick was the owner-manager at that time. Then the Northern Ice Company came and I worked for them. We would be ice harvesting late in December, it all depended on the season. I think we used to let the ice get at least a foot (thick) before we'd start. It would gradually get deeper. We cut ice 42 inches thick at one time. When we wanted to cut the ice we'd go out and lay out the ice field. Then we'd put up the trestle and the lift to run the ice on. We'd cut a channel and work back from the channel—the ice was all brought into this channel and run up the chute on to the trestle.
>
> Then we'd cut the ice into blocks about four feet long. We used a team of horses and a plow, more or less like a saw, and then cut the blocks down to about a foot. Most of the ice from the dam was sent to Regina, they had ice houses there—and then we loaded for Moose Jaw, Lumsden, Davidson and Regina Beach.
>
> The hauling of ice from the Condie Dam to Regina was done with trucks, but all the loading onto the cars was done by horses.
>
> I think I started about '26 and ended about '29 or '30. I'd work from seven to six and get one hour off at noon. We'd work to February if not longer—about two and a half months.

Standard textbooks describe the Great Depression as a time of economic collapse, dust storms and hardships. Yet, the following excerpt from an account by a ninety-five-year old pioneer from Humboldt, Saskatchewan offers a different perspective to his grade seven interviewer:

> . . . The Dirty Thirties—I consider that the best time of my life. Everybody was just exactly the same. Nobody could go over anybody else. Everybody shared with everybody else. If you was hard up, somebody would help you. If you needed help, they'd help you. If you was short of something they'd give it to you if they had it. It was a wonderful experience to go through the thirties. I wouldn't have missed it for anything.

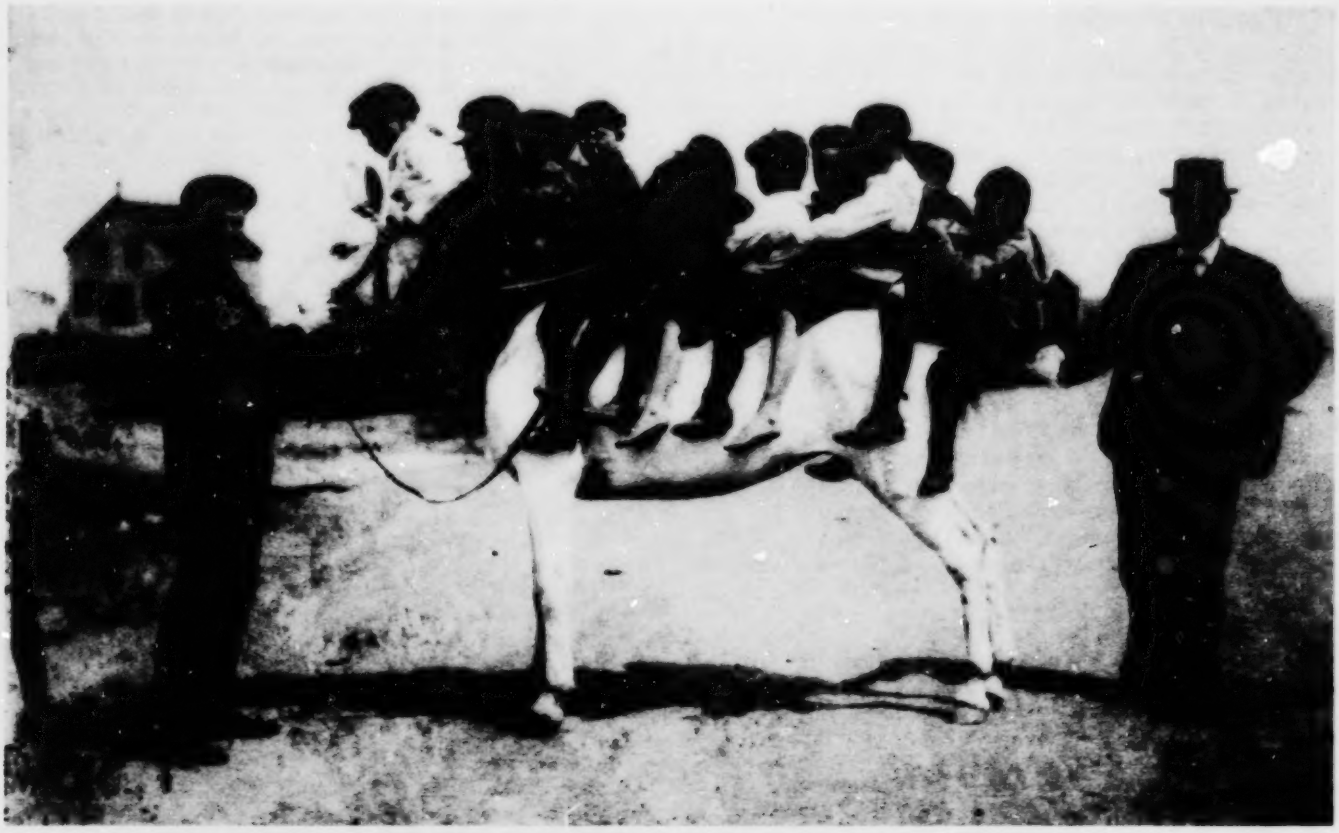
Older relatives not only can talk about their own youth but also may be able to supply interesting stories about the interviewer's ancestors. They should be encouraged to elaborate and provide details of lore passed on by previous generations. The following transcript is an excellent example of a native woman telling her granddaughter about her own grandparents' experiences during the Riel Rebellion:

> When my grandfather used to visit us he would talk about Custer's battle and the Riel Rebellion. My grandmother said that she lived through that Riel Rebellion when they were north there. I guess they didn't want to join so they ran away from there. They went somewhere near Moose Jaw and they camped along Moose Jaw Creek . . . . There were some Indian people like old Tom Whiteman, they said he joined it. Not on his own will—they forced him to join it. Any man that was seen, Indian or Metis, had to join and that's why the Indians had to hide. They didn't want to join that fight.

Family historians increasingly are becoming aware of the importance of collecting their relatives' tape recorded accounts because the preserved spoken word not only can be of as much sentimental value as a family scrapbook but will be of great benefit to future generations. Oral history projects also can help strengthen family ties when the student recognizes and learns to appreciate certain unique family qualities.

How many of us wish we had had an opportunity to listen to the voice of a great-grandparent or that of an even earlier ancestor? Here is a revealing excerpt from an interview that one day will have immense nostalgia value for the informant's descendants:

> John and I went out trapping. We were on this beaver pond, and in the first part of the winter the water is quite high, but later it drops and that's what happened on this pond—it dropped about a foot. Of course the water froze again and that made an empty layer in between.
>
> My husband was cleaning this out in front of the beaver house to set his traps. He pulled some sticks out and lost his grip with his arms down through the hole. And he went in that way with his head and shoulders in the water and his arms straight down. He was pinned there and he couldn't move up or down. And if it wouldn't have been for me being there and pulling, 'cause the snow was so deep too, it was about three feet deep. I had quite a job pulling him out, but with him wriggling and me pulling, we finally made it. I got him out of there.
>
> That is one reason why we like to go out together if we can. When we go together we have each other's company. It's very romantic, it's the sport of it, we really like going out together. We find that more entertaining than a dance . . .



"Horsing around," Regina, 1903. Saskatchewan Archives Board E. B. Williams Album, p. 110.

Family History Interview Outline[1]

Obtain as many details as possible. While some questions can be expanded, others may have to be omitted altogether.

I. Childhood

1. Date of birth.
2. Place of birth: town, village, city. If born on a farm, state size and nature.
3. Special characteristics of birthplace.
4. Names of parents, maternal and paternal grandparents. Description of ancestors: origin, physical traits, occupations, political and other activities.
5. Number of siblings.
6. Nature of dwelling: farmhouse, log cabin, stone house.
7. Relationships with parents — intimate, distant.
8. Education: level attained, school days, teachers, classmates.
9. Activities: social, recreational, religious.
10. Discipline at home and at school — strict, relaxed.
11. Responsibilities and chores at home.

II. Immigration Experience (applicable to immigrant informants)

1. Conditions of life in the old country.
2. Reasons for leaving — personal, religious, economic; political displacement.
3. Knowledge about Canada prior to arrival.
4. Means of transportation: to port of embarkation; to Canada.
5. How was the voyage financed?
6. Description of vessel.
7. Life on board ship — anecdotes, adventures, mishaps.
8. Port of entry — first meeting with Canadian immigration officials.
9. Method of transportation to Canadian destination.
10. Reasons for choosing location.
11. First impressions of Canada; were expectations fulfilled?
12. Description of first home.

13. Employment: problems finding work, language difficulties, competition among immigrants, description of work place, employers and supervisors, first wages earned, general standard of living.
14. Neighbourhood: rural or urban. Reason for settling there — presence of other countrymen, ethnic institutions, other ethnocultural groups.
15. Social life — entertainment, memorable experiences, relatives and friends.

III. Career

1. Compulsory or voluntary military service: wartime experiences, impressions, psychological effects.
2. Professional training: trade school, on-the-job apprenticeship, university.
3. Reasons for selecting career; method of obtaining first job.
4. Age at time of first job.
5. Job loss and unemployment.
6. Promotions and demotions.
7. Possible racial or religious discrimination.
8. Union activities: strikes, union leaders; opinions about unions.
9. Successes and disappointments.
10. Retirement: pensions, standard of life, contentment, regrets.

IV. Marriage and Family

1. Circumstances of first meeting with spouse.
2. Spouse's age at first meeting. His/her family background.
3. Courtship, proposal, wedding arrangements, wedding ceremony, honeymoon.
4. Parents' opinion of spouse, relationships with in-laws, interference from relatives.
5. Early years of married life: anecdotes on first home, financial situation.
6. Children: names, birth dates, characteristics, interests.
7. Division of responsibilities for child rearing.
8. The family unit: meaning, expectations of spouse and children; values — hard work, religion, education.
9. Special celebrations: family attendance at religious services, traditions, food, family vacations and holidays.
10. House decorations, arts and crafts.
11. Family health: sicknesses, cures.
12. Language(s) spoken in the home.
13. Marriage difficulties, breakdown.

V. Reflections on the Past

1. Happy, most memorable events.
2. Tragedies: disease, death, other problems.
3. Views on a changing society: politics, world order, technology, morals.
4. Philosophy of life: insight and wisdom derived from past experiences; advice to younger generation.

Notes

[1] Interview outline based on those found in Robert Harney, *Oral Testimony and Ethnic Studies* (Toronto: 1977), pp. 8-13; Carl Oblinger, *Interviewing the People of Pennsylvania: A Conceptual Guide to Oral History* (Harrisburg: 1978), pp. 70-75; Ellen Robinson Epstein and Rona Mendelsohn, *Record and Remember: Tracing Your Roots Through Oral History* (New York: 1978); pp. 40-43.

Thomas Howard and grandchildren with a four-horse team, St. Luke district, ca. 1910. Saskatchewan Archives Board R-A6194.

VII. Pioneer Reminiscences

Saskatchewan is a young province and people who lived through its early days are still accessible. We are fortunate in this respect for even today it is possible to find people who were "pioneers" in the true sense of the word. These people are able to recall the days when schools, churches and communities began to appear on the landscape of the province. Men and women who played major roles in the development of various organizations and movements can offer first-hand accounts of their activities. People who broke the prairie sod with oxen, cleared bush by hand, experienced life on the frontier, tell fascinating stories and tales to young listeners. The memories of the pioneers are usually of hardship, estrangement and struggle against the harsh environment. Yet their fondest memories are also from that period. They reminisce about the solidarity within the rural community, the closeness of the family and the social activities that broke the monotony of labour and hard winters.

Students can learn a great deal from an oral history project relating to settlement history. Pioneer reminiscences will enable the student to relate better to other aspects of the province's history. Furthermore, the students will get a better understanding of the profound influence of the landscape, climate and other factors upon the people of Saskatchewan.

Despite the advanced ages of informants, project interviewers will be surprised by their keen memories and the accuracy of the data they furnish. This is how one woman describes her "bridal home" during early homesteading days in the Prince Albert region of Saskatchewan:

> When you are young everything seems easy, but it was also lonesome. At the start there was so much bush around. Sometimes I would look up and see just the sky, with nothing but the bush around me. Couldn't walk anywhere because there was water-sloughs all over. And the mosquitoes! Something unbelievable, there were swarms and swarms of them.
>
> We lived in a very small shack—I will describe my 'bridal home' to you. It was a log cabin with a sod roof. It was made of little small spruce poles, then came straw or hay and finally the sod. In the summer time the sod roof would keep the sun out and it would be very cool. But if it would rain, it would come right through and the water would keep coming for a day after the rain quit. We had a rough lumber floor and the walls were plastered with mud. There was a little shanty, a sort of lean-to for the kitchen. We didn't have any furniture other than an old bed with a straw mattress and a horse blanket, five flannelette sheets and one pillow. We had a table that was made of rough lumber (with no tablecloth on it). The legs were made from spruce trees that we cut and hewed down. On it we had two plates two forks, but no spoons! To heat the place we had a little air-tight heater and a little cook stove. We didn't even have a broom! We'd go out and cut some branches and used them to sweep the floor. That's all we needed.

Fred White, Vanguard, 1913, "Rawleigh Man." Saskatchewan Archives Board R-A2725.

Another pioneer recalled how she managed to keep food without a refrigerator.

> My husband built an ice well. He dug a hole in the ground and lined it with logs. In the winter he would gradually fill the well with water. Eventually the sides of the logs would freeze and the well would be filled with ice to the top. Of course the ice would gradually melt, but it kept food fresh all summer long. I kept butter down there and if I cleaned a chicken I would put it down there to keep it fresh. There was a sort of shack built around the well with an open door. The well had a cover on it and you would have to go down the ladder to pick up the food.

Although the two preceding accounts deal with some of the difficulties early settlers had to face, students should interview several others to be able to compare their frontier life descriptions and how they coped without modern construction materials and appliances, with those gathered by their classmates. This will result in lively classroom discussions with a chance for students to expand their investigations. They could collect early photographs and drawings of pioneer dwellings or look at some of the artifacts in local museums.

Horses were important to the Saskatchewan economy until well into the 1940s. In the following interview the informant talks about her father and how he trained horses for work on the farm:

> My dad was a horseman. He broke about twenty new horses a year and sold them to farmers around Kincaid, Swift Current and even shipped some to Ontario. Breaking horses has always required patience and hard work. Someone got up at four o'clock in the morning to round up the horse herd. It is a thrill to ride a good cow pony after a herd of wild horses as the sun is coming up. Once the horses were in the corral, Dad took a lariat and roped those he wanted. He would snub it to a post and get a halter on it; no small task. Sometimes they tied the bronc to the horn of the saddle and pulled the horse around.
>
> The next step was to get the horse into a stall in the barn. Again, it required much patience and strength as the horse was nervous and afraid of anything strange. You had to gain the bronc's confidence so you could walk in beside him without getting kicked. In a few days the harness had to be eased on to his back. And then he would be hitched onto a wagon with a quiet horse and driven around, so that he could learn the use of the reins and words like "whoa."
>
> I had many a rough bouncing ride over the prairie as my dad trained a green horse. The next step was to hitch six or eight horses to a plow or cultivator and work them in the field. By the end of the summer my dad had twenty young work horses ready for sale.

Fifty or sixty years ago rural schools were a far cry from today's modern institutions. The following interview demonstrates that in those days children had certain other responsibilities, besides doing their homework:

> We didn't have drinking facilities like you have here. Water had to be brought to school. In our case, there was a neighbour about a half a mile away and the students all took turns every day to walk a mile and carry back a pail of water. And you know, that wasn't so bad but if you tried carrying a pail of water with another person, you'd soon find out that you have to be gaited the same or it started to spill. So we had to get an idea of who walked the same so that when they carried this water it would

be even rhythm. So, every day we had to walk this half a mile and a half a mile back with a pail of water. Well that was a pretty good chore.

Here a retired teacher relates how she provided hot meals for her students:

> The school inspector arrived at the school. He was very interested in an arrangement I had made for hot lunch at school. We had a furnace, so I had the children each bring a potato scrubbed ready for use and we took a big syrup pail, a gallon syrup pail, and punched it full of holes.
>
> At recess time in the morning we took out the ashes from the furnace and put the pail full of potatoes in there. By noon the potatoes were beautifully roasted. As well as this, each child brought whatever else he wanted in the way of something hot for noon hour and sat it in a little jar on the register. By noon they had a good hot meal, a potato and some of them brought stew or soup.
>
> The inspector was quite excited over all this, in fact he asked me to go to the convention the next fall and explain to the other rural teachers how they could arrange a hot meal for their students.

Pioneer Reminiscences Interview Outline[1]

The following list of topics can be used as a base for recording an individual's story:

I. General Information:

1. Date of birth; description of place of birth.
2. Parents' and grandparents' names, occupations.
3. Year of arrival in Saskatchewan; reasons for coming West.
4. Previous knowledge about the West obtained by listening to other people, reading books, railroad or government literature.
5. Journey to Western Canada: mode of transportation — travel with others or alone; accompanied by friend(s) and/or family. Anecdotes about adventures, accidents, mishaps.
6. Place of settlement: did relatives come earlier or later?
7. Travel in the West: on business, to attend religious services, to visit friends. Modes of transportation.
8. Trading centres: distance from home, changes due to the emergence of new towns and/or improved means of travel.
9. Shopping: frequency of trips, shopping on Saturdays, by mail order.
10. Arrival of first telephone.
11. The Great Depression: people leaving the district in the 1930s.
12. Participation in organizations, politics.
13. Acquisition of first car, combine, tractor.
14. Origin of local place names, school districts, hamlets, railway stations, creeks, hills.
15. Most important changes in the community since first coming to Saskatchewan.

II. Food

1. Year of starting housekeeping in Western Canada; number of people for which meals were prepared; distance from nearest food store, frequency of food shopping trips; problems adjusting to new diet.
2. Flour and other grain products: type of flour used — white, rye, graham, whole wheat. Was flour milled locally?
3. Sugar and syrups: quantities purchased, brands of golden corn syrup used.
4. Dairy products: fresh milk and butter supplies, packing eggs for winter, kinds of cheese made.
5. Meat, poultry and fish: availability of fresh meat and poultry, preserving and smoking meat, meat rings in the area; wild game and fowl, fishing, kinds of fish available.
6. Beverages: coffee, tea, herbal and alcoholic.
7. Vegetables: availability of fresh produce — potatoes, cabbage, carrots, onions, turnips, beets, cucumber, tomatoes, garlic; method of drying peas, corn, beans.
8. Fruits: availability of fresh fruit; method of drying plums, apples, pears, apricots, peaches, berries; availability of raisins, currants, other dried fruit.
9. Preserving vegetables and fruits, canning meat, making vinegar.
10. Store-bought foodstuffs — biscuits, macaroni, molasses, sugar, salt, baking powder, jam, cheese, canned sardines, fresh fruit, nuts, dates, tapioca, cornflakes and other cereals.
11. Baking: type of yeast used, hops, salt rising, cream of tartar; making own baking powder.
12. Water supply: source of drinking water — well, river, slough, dugout; distance of source from dwelling, methods of hauling and storing — pail, barrel, tank.
13. A typical everyday menu.
14. Cooking for special occasions — Christmas, Easter, namedays, birthdays, weddings.
15. Favourite recipes.

III. Pioneer Schools

1. First school in the district; persons responsible for design and construction. Materials used — logs, lumber, stone, other. Size of building and number of classrooms. With or without basement? What was it used for? Major additions, later alterations. If building no longer in use, give reasons for change — burned down, abandoned when new school built, closed down because of lack of pupils.

2. Organization and administration: number of families with school-aged children involved in establishing school; bachelors or others who helped build it. Community opposition toward idea of starting a school. Origin of school district's name. Trustee board members — father, women, bachelors. Popularity of annual ratepayers' meetings, participation by New Canadians.
3. Teachers: average length of stay, residence, boarding place's distance from school, methods of transportation used to get there. Preference of male or female teachers; salary disparity (if any) between male and female. Teacher's involvement within the community. Did he/she favour one particular ethnocultural or religious group or one particular age group of students?
4. System of older pupils aiding younger ones — marking arithmetic tests, listening to reading, giving dictation.
5. Nature of report cards or other means of advising parents of pupils' progress.
6. School inspector: regularity of visits, mode of transportation. Was he respected by trustees, teachers, others?
7. School maintenance: who performed janitorial duties, looked after classroom lighting and heating? Type of stove or furnace used; type of fuel burned.
8. School supplies: were books purchased by school board? Were notebooks, pencils and other supplies provided?
9. School attendance: number of pupils, their domiciles' distance from school, mode of transportation to school — on foot, by bus, on horseback, by wagon, by sleigh in winter.
10. School closures: in winter due to bad weather; in spring at seeding time; in summer during harvest. Closures due to contagious diseases.
11. Learning attitudes of pupils: reasons for liking or disliking school.
12. Classroom activities: typical school programme — reading, writing, arithmetic.

Notes

[1] Adapted from "Pioneer Questionnaires" prepared by the Saskatchewan Archives Board, Regina and Saskatoon, 1955.

VIII. Local History

Local and regional history has long been a subject of strong interest in Saskatchewan. The task of preserving and documenting the historical past at the local level has been assumed by community residents and historical societies. Anniversary celebrations and provincial jubilees have resulted in the preparation of countless local history publications. This interest continues as many cities, towns and villages across the province are celebrating or preparing for their centennials. The appreciation for history at the local level is not only a tribute to past generations but has contributed significantly to our knowledge and understanding of provincial history. Each community effort, whether it is a published, staged or broadcast document of the past, goes to the heart of provincial history.

Quite understandably, there has developed a close affinity between oral history practice and the essential goals of local history groups. Community historians sooner or later discover that after poring long hours over historical sources such as newspapers, correspondence, diaries, photographs and manuscript collections, large gaps remain. Much of the history of our communities has not been written down: it remains in the memories of the people. Oral testimony in many instances has proven to be decisive and is sometimes the only documentary material available.

An oral history project centred on the local past is well suited to the classroom. It is a subject area which can be sophisticated and stimulating. Students are given an opportunity to conduct in depth original historical research which can benefit themselves and the community at large. Whatever the level of historical activity in the locality, there can always be found unexplored areas.

When planning and designing a local history project for your class you may wish to concentrate on settlement, agriculture, natural resources, transportation or local government or you might want to consider the impact of national movements and world events on your particular region. There may be other themes to discover but, regardless of the ones you decide to pursue, there is an abundance from which to choose.

Oral history does not always tell the whole story. The testimonies students collect primarily will reflect personal points of view and, in many instances, the evidence they obtain, although unique, may be factious and difficult to judge. It, therefore, is important for students to engage in extensive preparatory work, tapping all the sources at their disposal. In most cases, a representative cross-section of people from various backgrounds and ages should be interviewed. One possible approach could be to separate the class into several groups, assigning each group to collect testimony from people belonging to different generations. Comparison between individual tape recorded interviews can result in lively classroom discussions as the different segments likely will reveal diverse perceptions of work, religion, family life and politics, expressed by people from various age groups.

The following are excerpts from tape recorded memoirs about life in Moose Jaw at the turn of the century:

> One interesting item of the early days in Moose Jaw was the laying of the sewer and water in the main street, I think in 1905. In the early spring we started the digging of the holes with pick and shovel, no power, just straight pick and shovel. Down near the Maple Leaf Hotel and the low part of the town, our trench was about 15 feet deep because I remember we had to relay the dirt up onto a platform and the man working on the platform had to throw it out of the top. The sewer was put in the bottom and then a few feet above it, the water line was laid. If I remember correctly, it was a wooden pipe wrapped with wire and tarred to keep away corrosion.
>
> It was very hard digging. The frost was down about seven feet and we had to dig that just like chipping out rock. If anybody knows anything about frost digging, why that's what it was. And it was just pick and shovel, working for a contractor from Winnipeg. I just don't remember the name offhand. For 10 hours a day we were paid one dollar, which meant 10 cents an hour. It was pretty hard work for 10 cents an hour, which would surprise many of the workmen of today.
>
> In 1906, I believe it was, I went to work for Fowler and Heasman, grocers and butchers on the main street of Moose Jaw, as a delivery boy. We had two delivery wagons and one special wagon for delivering late orders of meat for dinner. This store, as some of the oldtimers that are still around there may remember, was on the block between River and High on the east side, next door to Kent and Brown shoe store, and lower down there was a bake shop and other commodities of that kind.
>
> I worked for quite awhile for Fowler and Heasman, sometimes on delivery and sometimes in the store. In the fall I was sent to work with a butcher at the slaughter house and we killed off all the beef and pigs in the late fall when they were frozen solid and put into a large storage place for the winter. In the wintertime we went down to the slaughter house and brought up what we thought would be sufficient meat in the way of carcasses and quarters of beef to do the work and supply the store for a week. In that way we kept everything—brought it up and thawed it out ready for cutting. Then later on in the wintertime we went down to the river and ploughed out ice in great chunks as they used to do in those days for the summer and stored it away in large blocks down at the slaughter house where we had a large ice house.
>
> When I worked for Fowler and Heasman, meat was cheap according to what we know it now. Round steak was two pounds for 25 cents; sirloin steak was 15 or 17 cents a pound. At that time many English people coming into Moose Jaw came to the store and wanted ox tail or heart and things of that kind. We usually didn't bring them to the store as there was no call for them and good meat was cheap. However, if we got an order for ox tail and heart when we were slaughtering we saved them and brought them in. Ox tail sold for 5 cents each and beef heart for 25 cents each.
>
> Going back to the winter of 1904-1905, January and February were very mild during that winter and quite a few young Englishmen, like myself, were out of work at the time and we were able to play footbal.. We played soccer on vacant lots on Ominica Street East. It was probably north of where the hospital is now. If I remember right, a Mr. Bogue had a pasture fenced in on one side of Ominica Street and he kept one or two horses in there. At that time, I might say, we had a very good football/soccer team in Moose Jaw. There was a good league known as the South Saskatchewan League—teams from Tuxford, Caron, Moose Jaw, Regina and Drinkwater. I think Weyburn was in there too. We had a very good team and most of them were Old Country boys, Scots, English. One year we were sponsored by Colonel Tuxford who later became, I believe, Major General Tuxford in the First World War. I know we played in Moose Jaw and won the South Saskatchewan shield in one of those years—1906 or 1907— and Colonel Tuxford gave a dinner for the team on the presentation of the shield and bought individual medals for the players.

East side main street in Lashburn, ca. 1900. Saskatchewan Archives Board R-A166(1).

In the early days, on the South Hill side, there was a large group of Galicians who came to work on the railroad as section hands, extra gangs and so on. They came in and dug out places to live in on the side of the South Hill. They boarded them up with whatever bits of lumber they could find in the yard and occasionally borrowed grain doors to build the walls and roof and put sod on the roof. They lived there pretty well all summer and later on in the fall they went out to where they homesteaded in the northeast section of the province. A lot of Galicians homesteaded up in that country, and I suppose their descendants are still there.

We used to go over there to a place on South Hill called Snake Hill, right on the top and on the riverside which was just covered with garter snakes. We used to go over there on weekends and go down into the river where River Park is now and spend time down there. Sometimes there were Indians camped there. Some of the Sioux Indians camped over on South Hill at different times. Sometimes some of the women came in to do housework in Moose Jaw and some of the men worked around. For instance, we had one at Fowler and Heasman. I had one big man to help kill off the cattle in the fall. Big Jim, we used to call him. But his Indian name was Kicking Horse. He was a good butcher. He knew all about cattle killing and butchering. He was there for two winters that I was there.

Local History Interview Outline[1]

I. Agriculture

1. Importance to the community.
2. Types of agriculture in the area: grain farming; mixed crops; ranching; market gardening: specialized crops.
3. Distinguishing aspects of agriculture in the area.
4. Changes in types of crops and yields; new strains of seed.
5. Local inventors and inventions.
6. Agriculture societies, clubs and organizations

II. Industry and Business

1. Growth of particular industries: honey processing; alfalfa pelleting; rapeseed crushing; farm implement manufacturing; steel; electrical; other.
2. Government support: provincial; federal; local.
3. Early businesses: stores; flour mills, abattoirs; other service oriented enterprises.
4. Extent of trading area; changes over the years.
5. Producer and consumer cooperatives: early organization; community involvement; level of success; effect on private businesses.
6. Role of financial institutions: banks; trust companies; credit unions.
7. Local controversies over business hours.
8. Board of trade or chamber of commerce activities.

III. Transportation and Communication

1. Earliest modes of transportation.
2. The coming of the railway: significance to community; effect of change in service; railway abandonment.
3. Development of present road system.
4. Factors affecting transportation: geography; climate; gasoline prices; inland terminals.
5. Public transportation: bus; train; taxi.

Moosomin women's hockey team, ca. 1915. Saskatchewan Archives Board R-A3291.

6. Importance of air service.
7. Postal service.
8. Telephone communication: first service, private or public company; effect on rural communities.
9. Use of telegraph service.
10. Newspapers: role in community; editors' involvement in controversial issues.
11. Effects of television on family and social life.

IV. Culture and Recreation

1. Individuals, societies or institutions instrumental in promoting cultural activities.
2. Cultural facilities in area.
3. Multicultural activities: ethnocultural organizations; level of cultural maintenance by various groups; multicultural festivals; cross-cultural exchange.
4. Artists; craftsmen; musicians; writers.
5. Popular entertainers: old time fiddlers; polka bands; family orchestras.
6. Evolution and type of library service available.
7. Organized sports teams and leagues: soccer; hockey; baseball.
8. Emphasis on sports in community.
9. Importance of annual "sports day."
10. Dances: sponsors; popularity; type of dancing; jitney (taxi) dancing.
11. Building and maintenance of recreational facilities.

V. Government and Political Life

1. First type of local government.
2. Primary responsibilities of first councillors.
3. Most important issues and problems faced by local government and administration.
4. Relationship between local government and provincial and federal bodies.
5. Roles of local constituency members in provincial and federal politics.
6. Voting patterns in area: reasons for changes.

Notes

[1] Outline based on sections of *Exploring Local History in Saskatchewan*, Regina: 1985.

IX. Using the Interviews

Although this handbook has concentrated on the application of oral history to the teaching of social studies and history, the method quite naturally hones skills in other disciplines. We have already mentioned its potential in developing enquiry skills and assessing conflicting evidence. Written and oral language skills can also be successfully developed by the oral history process. Students can formulate and write out their questions prior to the interview and prepare summaries after. By practicing for the interview and subsequently analyzing their technique, their elocution and confidence in conversing with others (especially adults) can be enhanced. Oral history projects, in fact, can be organized quite effectively from a multidisciplinary approach.

The potential in the development of various skills by the use of the oral history method lies in the "process" rather than the "product." The familiar adage "It's not the song, it's the singing" certainly rings true here. This does not mean, however, that the resulting tapes have no value and that an oral history project be terminated immediately after the interview. There are numerous possibilities for you, the teacher, to use the material created by your students. The oral history recordings are unique documents and can be excellent learning resources.

Teachers in Saskatchewan have successfully utilized oral history tapes in their classrooms. Let's turn to a couple of examples.

Garry Andrews, a Foam Lake educator, used oral history as a means of motivating his English students to sharpen their communication skills. By using the "levels of thinking" advocated by Benjamin Bloom, he was able to design post-interview activities according to the abilities of the individual student. In level one—the knowledge level—the exercise consisted simply of asking the student to remember the content of the interview. Level four students were expected to assess critically the information and prepare an original creation based upon it. One creative writing assignment by Andrews asked that students interview pioneers and then write short stories from their perspective.

Another English teacher, Terry Toews of Hafford, coordinated an oral history project with the aim of producing a book about home remedies, making lye soap, weather signs and other traditions and skills as practiced by the older members of the community. Students from grades eight to twelve were involved and her typing class transcribed the tapes. Other students who did not carry out interviews participated in the project by carrying out other responsibilities related to the publication of the book. The project was a success and resulted in a sense of pride on the part of the students and their interviewees.

An audio-visual presentation such as a slide-tape show is another way of putting the tapes to good use. If you live in a larger centre you may want to contact the local cable television operator about preparing a feature on the community channel.

Finally, you should determine whether the tapes should be preserved permanently in the school or a local library, museum or archives. Remember that the tape recordings are unique documents and contain primary information not only on the subject discussed in the interview but at the same time reveal the personalities of the student interviewer and the interviewee. In projects where the students interviewed relatives, the tapes can be made available to family members. Quite often the tape is the only voice recording made of a grandparent and will be of sentimental value to their descendants. Many family historians today preserve the "voices" and stories of relatives much as they do photographs and other memorabilia.

To conclude, oral history is a proven and effective method to enhance the curriculum. We must, however, view it as one of the many instructional tools available to today's teacher and not as the ultimate cure all.

We have tried to demonstrate that a well-planned and well-organized oral history project can aid in the study of history and that the technique can intellectually stimulate students. Not only are they given an opportunity to be creative and to collect unique, personal information but, in the process, they are sharing their experiences with other members of the community. In effect, the community itself becomes the classroom.

X. Appendix

Beaver Creek School,
Poplarville, Saskatchewan.
October 10, 1984.

Henry Kowalski,
R.R. 1,
Poplarville, Saskatchewan.

Dear Mr. Kowalski:

The grade nine students at Beaver Creek School are learning about the history of Poplarville by tape recording interviews with the town's long-time residents. For many years Poplarville was the social and economic centre in this part of Saskatchewan. Better transportation, exodus to larger centres and shifting priorities in our economy have changed our town considerably. Much of the town's history is not written down; it lives in the memory of the people.

As someone who has lived here nearly all of his life, served on the town council and as postmaster for over thirty years, I feel you would be an excellent informant in our oral history project. Would you be willing to have one of the students come around and visit you? Your observations and experience would be of tremendous value to the students. The tape would also be preserved for other students in our school library.

Together with my grade nine students we hope that your reply will be positive and look forward to hearing from you. I may be contacted at 721-0342. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Ivan R. Leppington,
Vice-Principal.
IRL/ss.

Figure 1: Sample Introductory Letter to a Potential Informant.

Part I

Catalogue No. _____

Accession No. _____

Informant _____
Surname Given Names

Address at time of interview _____
Street Number Town/City Province

Date of birth _____ Place of birth _____

If born outside of Canada, year of arrival _____

Brief description of migration route. (Note earlier migrations, continental and trans-oceanic migrations, modes of transportation, dates of embarkations and arrivals)

_____

_____

_____

Date of arrival in Saskatchewan _____

Places settled in Saskatchewan and duration

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Ethnocultural identity _____ Generation _____

Religious identity _____ Present occupation _____

Past occupations _____

Information about spouse (name, date of marriage, spouse's place and date of birth, ethnic identity) _____

_____

_____

Information about children and other kin _____

_____

_____

_____

Figure 2: Saskatchewan Sound Archives Programme Oral History Visitation Report.

Part II

Catalogue No. _____

Interviewer _____
Surname Given Names

Title of oral history project (if applicable) _____

_____

_____

Date of interview _____

Others present _____

Length of interview _____ Number of tapes _____

Language of interview _____ Photo of informant _____

Description of other material (if any) _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Related accession number(s) _____

Technical quality Excellent _____ Fair _____ Poor _____

Other observations _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Date of deposit _____ Interviewer's Signature _____

Figure 3: Saskatchewan Sound Archives Programme Oral History Visitation Report.

BEAVER CREEK SCHOOL

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Tape No. _____

I, _____, donate and grant to the Beaver Creek School this tape recorded interview for such instructional and educational purposes as shall be determined by the school.

_____
Name of Informant

_____
Address of Informant

_____
Signature of Interviewer

_____
Date of Agreement

Figure 4: Sample of Release Form Without Restrictive Clauses.

BEAVER CREEK SCHOOL

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Tape No. _____

I, _____, hereby release this tape recorded interview for use by the students and staff of the Beaver Creek School subject to the following restrictive conditions:

1. Use by students and staff only
2. Open to the public
3. To be open to the public only after _____
4. Special Conditions _____

_____

_____

_____
Name of Informant

_____
Address of Informant

_____
Signature of Interviewer

_____
Date of Agreement

Figure 5: Sample of Release Form With Restrictive Clauses.

INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Informant:	Miklos Kertesz
Interviewer:	Maria Molnar
Place of Interview:	Prince Albert, Saskatchewan
Date:	January 14, 1982.

Tape 1, Side 1

0 - 5 min.	Born July 16, 1897 in Paczin, Austria-Hungary. Childhood days. Education. Father was a cabinet maker. Mother deeply religious person. Three brothers, two sisters. World War I, political atmosphere in Hungary after war.
5 - 8 min.	Decision to emigrate to Canada in 1925. Reasons for leaving. Voyage across Atlantic. Arrival at cousin's home in Hamilton. First impressions of Canada.
8 - 12 min.	First job in slaughterhouse. Relations between workers from different ethnic backgrounds. Laid off after six months. Transient labourer in the tobacco farming districts of southern Ontario.
12 - 17 min.	Arrival in Davidson, Saskatchewan for harvest work in 1928. Spent winter in Dubuc working in exchange for board.
17 - 23 min.	Obtained job as bricklayer's helper in the construction of the Bessborough Hotel, Saskatoon, 1929-1931.
23 - 28 min.	Marriage to Eva Matray of Esterhazy, 1930. Large, traditional wedding.
28 - 30 min.	Depression years. Odd jobs. Wife's family assisted in providing food and money.

Tape 1, Side 2

0 - 5 min.	Family life and children: John b. 1931. Adam b. 1933. Ludwig b. 1934. Wife's untimely death in 1951.
5 - 10 min.	Move to Prince Albert in 1940. Self-employed as bricklayer. Plenty of work, hired two men in 1944. Establishes Tarka Construction Co. Employed 26 workers by 1948.

Figure 6: Sample Interview Summary.

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